MULTI AWARD WINNING!

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THE WORLD'S BEST NEWS & FACTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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Big wins at music awards
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NEWS
Mona Lisa to get its own room
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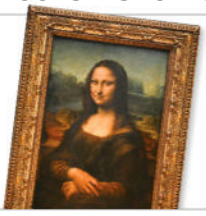


HOW TO
Valentine greetings to give
p25

February 14, 2025 • Vol. 6, Issue 251 • $5.99

Making sense of the world

THE WEEK Junior

THE BEST MAGAZINE FOR CURIOUS KIDS

BIRD BONANZA

Head outside and take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count p10

DID YOU KNOW?
In 2023, there were 10.2 million scheduled commercial flights in the US that carried more than 1 billion passengers.

A memorial for passengers of the American Eagle flight

Who is Sean Duffy?

US Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy was sworn into his role hours before the plane crash. Duffy, who is from Wisconsin, served in the US House of Representatives from 2011–2019. Prior to that, he was a district attorney (top lawyer) of Ashland County in Wisconsin, a TV news host, a professional lumberjack athlete, and a reality TV star.

Plane crashes near Washington, DC

On January 29, a passenger jet collided with a US Army helicopter over the Potomac River near Washington, DC. It was the worst airborne accident in the US in 20 years.

What happened?

American Eagle flight 5342 was headed from Wichita, Kansas, to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Arlington, Virginia, carrying 60 passengers and four crew members. (American Eagle is a network of smaller regional airlines that operate under the American Airlines name.) It was flying north over the Potomac and was moments from landing. A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from Fort Belvoir, in Virginia, was on a training flight with a three-person crew, heading south over the river. The two aircraft collided at about 9 p.m., falling into the water below. Aviation officials said there were no survivors.

A crew at the wreckage

Who was on board?

Passengers on the airplane included 14 skaters, coaches, and family members from the competitive figure skating community. They were returning from the US Figure Skating Championships, a major competition held before the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Wichita. The flight also carried lawyers, teachers, college students, and friends and business associates returning from a duck-hunting trip in Kansas, as well as two Chinese citizens and a police official from the Philippines. The Army helicopter was occupied by Captain Rebecca Lobach, Chief Warrant Officer Andrew Eaves, and Staff Sergeant Ryan O'Hara.

What may have caused the crash?

Investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), which is leading the investigation into the crash, said it is too soon to confirm the cause. They are collecting evidence from the wreckage, reviewing flight data and aircraft maintenance records, and conducting interviews with air traffic personnel. In a preliminary report, the Federal Aviation Administration said that at the time of the crash, one air traffic controller was doing the work of two people. The staffing was "not normal for the time of day and volume of traffic," the report said. Officials also said the helicopter was flying higher than it was supposed to. Sean Duffy, head of the US Transportation Department (see box above), said the investigation will be thorough.

How did people react?

Sarah Hirshland, head of the US Olympic & Paralympic Committee, said her organization was "devastated" by the crash. "These Olympic hopefuls represented the bright future of Team USA," she said. "They were remarkable young people and talents." The head of American Airlines, Robert Isom, said, "We are all hurting as we continue to grieve the loss of our passengers and team members. In the days ahead, we will work tirelessly with the administration and leaders in Congress to make our aviation system even safer." In a statement, the Army said, "Our deepest condolences go out to...all the families who are mourning the loss of their loved ones. We continue to work with the families of our fallen soldiers and support the ongoing investigations."

What will happen next?

As *The Week Junior* went to press, the investigation was ongoing. The NTSB said it will release a preliminary report within 30 days. Flight data recorders from both aircraft had been recovered from the wreckage and were being analyzed. Meanwhile, a barge with a crane on board began the complex process of removing the wreckage from the Potomac. The aircraft will be moved to another location for examination. Helicopter traffic around the area has been restricted.

Mona Lisa to get its own room

The *Mona Lisa*, considered to be the most famous painting in the world, will move to its own dedicated exhibition space at the Louvre Museum in Paris, France, by 2031. Emmanuel Macron, the nation's president, announced the plan on January 28, saying it will alleviate major crowding and long lines caused by the 25,000 visitors who view the painting each day.

The *Mona Lisa* was painted by Leonardo da Vinci in the early 1500s. Known for its subject's mysterious smile, it is currently displayed with dozens of other paintings in the museum's largest gallery, the Salle des États. Security guards keep the crowd moving, and each visitor has less than a minute to view the masterpiece. The new gallery will have a separate entrance, and visitors will be able to buy a ticket just to see the *Mona Lisa*.

The *Mona Lisa*

The changes are part of a larger project to update the museum, which opened in 1793 in a building that dates as far back as the 1500s. Macron said the goal is to increase the number of people who visit the Louvre each year from 9 million to 12 million.

AWARDS HISTORY
At the 2020 Grammys, 18-year-old Billie Eilish won five awards and became the youngest artist to win Album of the Year.

Beyoncé accepting the award for Best Country Album

Grammy Awards are presented

On February 2, the music industry gave out its most prestigious prizes at the 67th annual Grammy Awards. The televised ceremony was hosted by comedian Trevor Noah at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles, California. In addition to celebrating music, the event raised more than $7 million to aid communities affected by the recent California wildfires.

Grammy winners are chosen by 13,000 voting members of the Recording Academy. The awards honor music across many genres, including rock, rap, country, and jazz. The four major award categories are Album of the Year, Song of the Year, Record of the Year, and Best New Artist.

Beyoncé, who has the most Grammys of any artist in history, took home three awards, bringing her total to 35. With her first-ever Album of the Year award for *Cowboy Carter*, she became the first Black woman to win in this category in 26 years and the fourth overall. This was Beyoncé's fifth nomination in the category. She also made history as the first Black artist to win Best Country Album. Accepting Album of the Year, she said, "I hope we just keep pushing forward, opening doors."

In other major wins, rapper Kendrick Lamar won Record of the Year and Song of the Year for his hit single "Not Like Us." Best New Artist went to pop singer-songwriter Chappell Roan. R&B and soul artist Alicia Keys received the Dr. Dre Global Impact Award, which honors Black artists for their influence on the music industry. "Music is the unstoppable language that connects us all," Keys said in her acceptance speech. "Keep showing up with compassion, with empathy."

IT'S AN AMAZING WEEK FOR...

SEEING A SHADOW

On February 2, a famous groundhog named Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow at the annual Groundhog Day event in Gobbler's Knob, Pennsylvania. According to legend, the sighting forecasts six more weeks of winter.

Phil and his handler

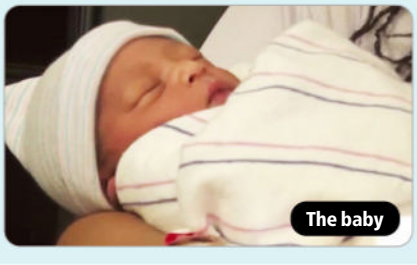
Father (right) and son

FATHERLY PRIDE

Jeremiah Trotter was a star player for the Philadelphia Eagles, and now he'll watch his son Jeremiah Trotter Jr. play for the same team at the Super Bowl on February 9. Trotter Jr. wears his father's number, 54. "I'm extremely proud of him, just living out his dreams," his father said.

A SWEET DELIVERY

After getting stuck in a historic snowstorm, an Alabama woman delivered a healthy baby boy named Dallas in a Krispy Kreme parking lot—and nicknamed him "Glaze." The shop offered the family free doughnuts for a year and a birthday party every year until Dallas turns 18. "There's nothing like a glazed doughnut," his mom said.



The baby

ON THE COVER: GETTY IMAGES (6); STUDIOCANAL SAS; JODI LEVINE FOR SUPERMARKET; ON THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (3); PHILADELPHIA EAGLES VIA FACEBOOK; COURTESY SHAVON BENNETT; OTHER PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (2); KRISTIE BOYD, U.S. HOUSE OFFICE OF PHOTOGRAPHY/HOUSE CREATIVE SERVICES

A view of North America's tallest mountain in Alaska (left) and the gulf along Florida's coastline

RARE ARTIFACT

The first map to use the name "America" was created in 1507 by a German mapmaker and is located in the US Library of Congress.

History of Google Maps

In 2005, Google launched Google Maps to help people search for directions on their computers. Within two years, Maps was able to provide real-time traffic information and street views and became available to download on mobile devices. Today, more than 1 billion people around the world use the app every month.

Dispute over geographic name changes

Google Maps said it will update the names of two major landmarks to follow an order from President Donald Trump. It will change the name of Denali mountain in Alaska to Mount McKinley and the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America. The order has created confusion among mapmakers and government agencies over how to carry it out.

What happened?

On January 20, Trump's first day in office, he signed an executive order (similar to a law) to change the names. Although laws must be approved by Congress (the branch of government that makes laws), the Constitution (highest law in the US) gives Presidents a limited ability to issue orders that require only their signature. They can be challenged in court and reversed by future Presidents.

Why did Trump do this?

Trump said he changed the name of North America's tallest mountain to Mount McKinley because Congress gave it that name in 1917 to honor US President William McKinley. (President Barack Obama renamed it Denali by executive order in 2015.) Trump said it was "appropriate" for the body of water that borders Mexico and the US to be known as the Gulf of America.

How did people react?

The changes were met with approval from some and outrage from others. Senator Lisa Murkowski, a Republican from Alaska, said the mountain must continue to be known by what Alaska's native tribe, the Koyukon Athabascans, called it: Denali ("the great one"). Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, a Republican whose state borders the gulf, said he was pleased with its new name. Claudia Sheinbaum, Mexico's president, asked Google not to follow Trump's order. She said the US can't rename the gulf because doing so violates the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

What changes will take place?

Google Maps will change the mountain's name to Mount McKinley. The gulf will appear as the Gulf of America in the US, while users in Mexico will see the Gulf of Mexico and people in other countries will see both names. Once the new names are part of the Geographic Names Information System, the US standard for place names, government agencies are expected to use them. It is unclear what private companies and other organizations will do.

WORD OF THE WEEK

LOVE

A thousand years ago, people used different words in Old English to describe different kinds of love. "Bearn-lufu," for example, was a mother's love for her child, "sib-lufu" was the love of one's family, and "freond-luf" was "friend-love." Today, we rely on the single powerful word "love" to express the feeling in all its forms.

THE WEEK IN HISTORY

February 11, 1753

First hospital in the colonies opens

On February 11, 1753, the first private hospital in the 13 colonies opened. Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia was started by Benjamin Franklin, a founder of the US, who helped raise funds for the medical facility after he saw a need for people to be cared for. Today, the 515-bed hospital is part of a health system run by the University of Pennsylvania, which Franklin also helped create.

A view of the hospital

The new franchise city

NWSL expands to Colorado

The NWSL (National Women's Soccer League) announced that Denver, Colorado, will be the home of the league's 16th soccer franchise, beating out Cleveland and Cincinnati in Ohio. NWSL commissioner Jessica Berman said Denver was chosen for its "passionate sports culture." The team, which has not been named, will begin playing in 2026 and plans to construct a facility designed specifically for women's soccer in Denver's city center.

Dog Man

Dog Man soars at the box office

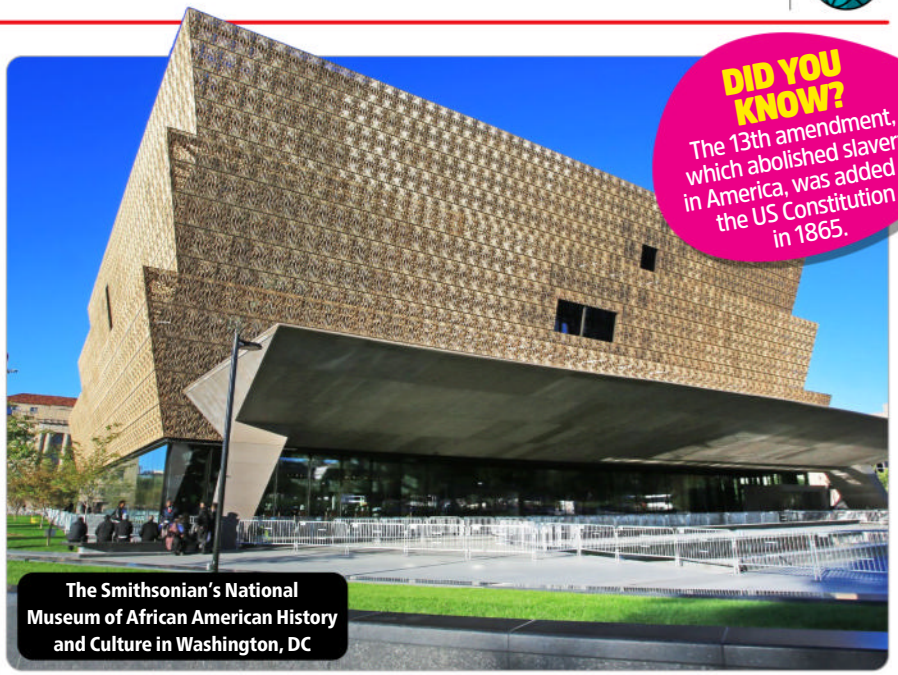
The animated comedy *Dog Man* by DreamWorks hit theaters on January 31, earning $36 million in ticket sales on its opening weekend. It was the biggest debut for a film in 2025. Only one animated film has had a better January release—*Kung Fu Panda 3* in 2016. *Dog Man* is based on the best-selling book series by Dav Pilkey and features the hero Dog Man trying to stop the evil cat Petey.

Foods featuring Aji Amarillo

Flavor of the year for 2025

McCormick, a seasoning company, announced that Aji Amarillo is its flavor of the year for 2025. Aji Amarillo, a yellow chile pepper native to South America and a staple in Peruvian cuisine, has a fruity, tropical taste with moderate heat. McCormick, which has released flavor trends since 2000, predicts that Aji Amarillo will become more popular in homes, restaurants, and grocery stores.

GETTY IMAGES (3); NWSL; DREAMWORKS ANIMATION.; MCCORMICK; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (4); GOOGLE.


The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC

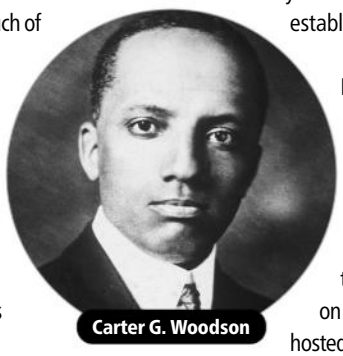
DID YOU KNOW?
The 13th amendment, which abolished slavery in America, was added to the US Constitution in 1865.

Black History Month begins in the US

This February, the US is celebrating Black History Month, an annual event to honor the contributions Black Americans have made to the nation, including the fight for equality and justice.

The theme for 2025 is "African Americans and Labor," selected by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). The theme was chosen to recognize the many ways that work—free and paid, skilled and unskilled—is at the center of much of Black history and culture.

Carter G. Woodson, who founded the group that would become the ASALH, first established a week for celebrating Black history in 1926. He chose a week in February that included the birthdays of Frederick Douglass (1818–1895), a leader of the movement to abolish slavery, and Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865), the US President who ended slavery. In 1976, the ASALH expanded the week into a month and President Gerald Ford called for the observance of Black History Month. Congress officially declared February to be Black History Month in 1986.


Carter G. Woodson

This year, the month has taken on new significance as President Donald Trump has banned federal programs that promote DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) and called for departments within the government to stop marking Black History Month, Women's History Month (in March), and other long-established historical months.

Nevertheless, events observing Black History Month will take place. The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, planned a discussion about the Underground Railroad on February 8. A virtual festival hosted by the ASALH will be held on February 22. "A Celebration of Black Love, Art, and Poetry" will be held in Gainesville, Florida, on February 15, and the Columbia City Theater in Seattle, Washington, has opened an exhibit that highlights Black history in the state.

THE WEEK'S SILLIEST HEADLINE

"Haircuts interrupted when cow forces its way into barbershop" *UPI*

Around the world

Paul Marcon with the trophy

Lyon, France
French team wins cooking contest

On January 28, a team of chefs from France won the Bocuse d'Or. This international cooking competition, sometimes called the "World Cup of cuisine," involves 24 teams from around the globe concocting dishes for judges during a two-day cook-off. Chef Paul Marcon, whose father won the competition in 1995, led the French team to victory. He said coming in first in the competition was a "childhood dream."

Protesters marching

Novi Sad, Serbia
Protests against government

Tens of thousands of people have joined protests against Serbia's government. A march from the capital, Belgrade, arrived in the northern city of Novi Sad on February 1, three months after a train station roof collapsed in the city, killing 15 people. Many people blamed the government for the tragedy, saying construction at the station wasn't done properly. Prime Minister Miloš Vučević resigned on January 28 in response to the anger.

Solar panels in Tanzania

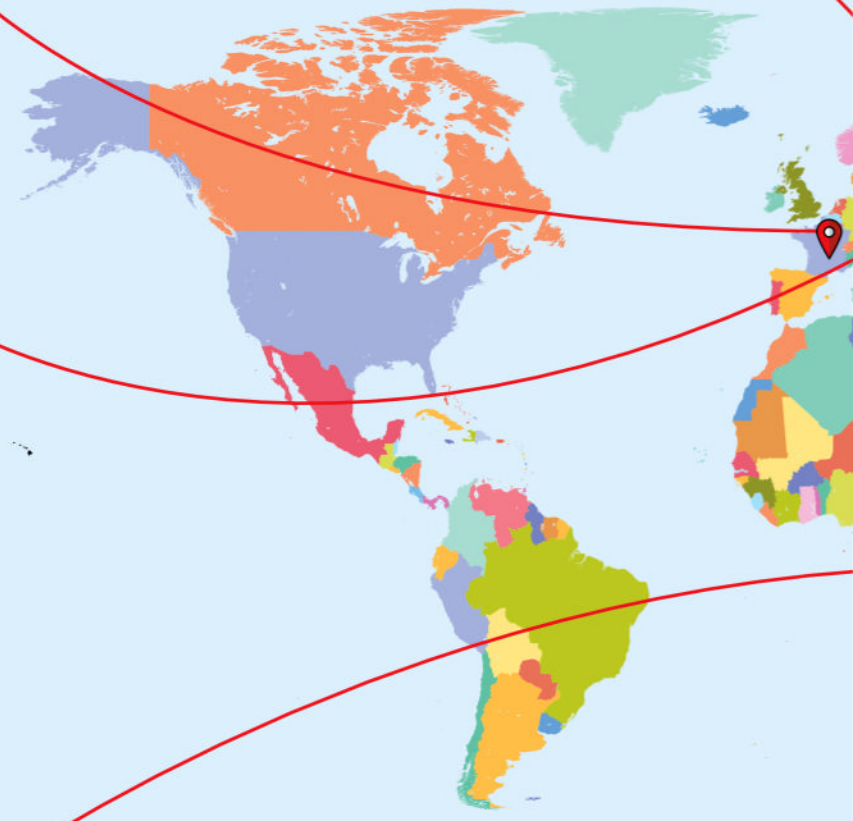
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Promise to electrify communities

On January 27–28, African leaders held a summit to improve energy access on the continent, where about 600 million people do not have electricity. International financial groups, including the World Bank, pledged $35 billion to bring electricity to 300 million people within six years by expanding existing power grids and creating solar mini-grids that use energy from the Sun.

Syria
Temporary president chosen

A temporary president has been selected to lead Syria while the country makes the transition to a new government. The new president, Ahmed al-Sharaa, led the rebel group that overthrew the previous government in 2024. For his first foreign trip as president, Sharaa traveled to Saudi Arabia to meet its crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman.

Ahmed al-Sharaa



Baghdad, Iraq
Skate park opens

The first skate park ever built in the capital city of Baghdad has opened, creating a safe space for skateboarders to practice their moves. Rusul Azim, a skater who attended the park's opening, said she thinks it will encourage more young people—especially females—to try the sport. Now that they have a place to train, Baghdad's skateboarders hope to take part in international competitions, like the Olympics.

Skateboarders try out the park.

GETTY IMAGES (5); ALAMY (3); REUTERS; SHUTTERSTOCK

Around the world

Crowds at the water

Prayagraj, India
Crowd crush at festival

At least 30 people died and 60 were injured in a crush at the Maha Kumbh Mela on January 29. The Maha Kumbh Mela is a Hindu festival that hundreds of millions of people are currently attending over several weeks. The crush happened as crowds gathered at the juncture of the Yamuna and Ganges rivers to bathe in the holy waters.

Hoshoryu

Tokyo, Japan
Sumo wrestler named grand champion

Hoshoryu, a sumo wrestler from Mongolia, has been awarded the title of yokozuna (grand champion). He is the 74th sumo wrestler to become a yokozuna, the sport's highest rank. A ceremony was held at the Meiji Shrine in Tokyo, where Hoshoryu had to perform rituals to earn his title, including a "ring-entering" ceremony. Despite extensive practice, he told BBC News, "I was still more nervous than I expected."

Sir Julius Chan

Papua New Guinea
Country mourns a "founding father"

Sir Julius Chan, one of Papua New Guinea's longest-serving politicians, has died. Chan served as prime minister twice and is credited with helping Papua New Guinea gain independence from Australia in 1975. He also helped create the country's banking system and stood up against racism. Following his death, the government declared a weeklong period of mourning so people can remember Chan.

Taranaki at sunset

Taranaki, New Zealand
Sacred mountain given special rights

Taranaki Maunga (Mount Taranaki) has officially been given the same legal rights as a person. The law was passed as part of an agreement between the national government and the Maori tribes, who are Indigenous (first to inhabit a place). Maori people view natural features, like mountains, as ancestors. The title will give tribes more power to ensure the mountain is protected.

Townsville, Australia
Severe flooding occurs

Thousands of people fled their homes after torrential rainfall brought severe flooding to northern Queensland. Authorities told people in parts of Townsville, northern Australia's largest city, to leave by February 2, but 10% of residents stayed. The floods left thousands of people without power and led to food shortages. A major bridge has collapsed, and one person has died.

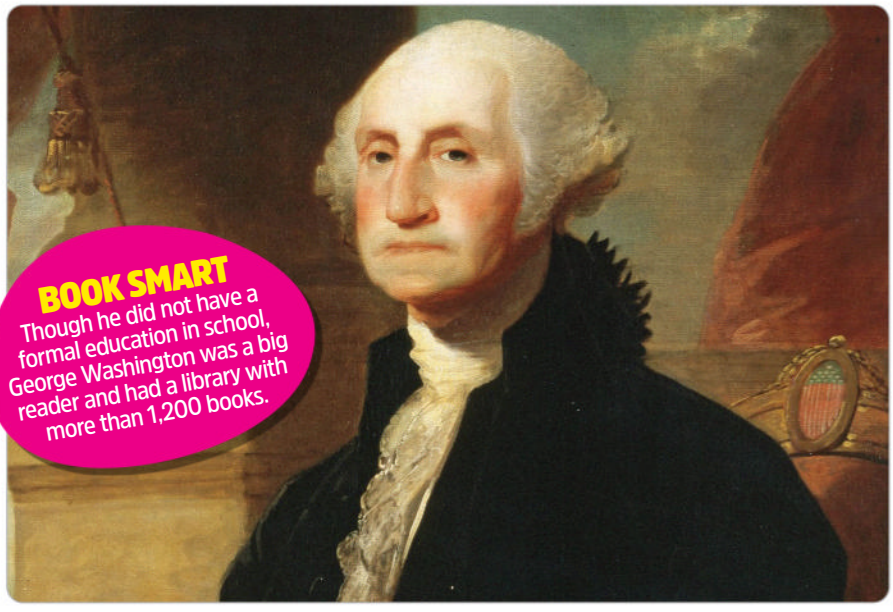
A car in Townsville

Was our first President the most important?

Some people say George Washington had the greatest impact, but others disagree.

What you need to know

- **George Washington was the first US President, serving two terms from 1789 through 1797.**
- **Before becoming President, he was a general who led the Continental Army to victory in the American Revolution.**
- **Washington also oversaw the US Constitutional Convention, which drafted the Constitution that created the US government.**
- **Since Washington, 44 other men have served as US President.**



BOOK SMART
Though he did not have a formal education in school, George Washington was a big reader and had a library with more than 1,200 books.

George Washington led the troops that freed the US colonies from British rule, then helped create the Constitution, which established a new, independent nation and is still the highest law in the US. Yet America has changed since his time, from 13 colonies to a massive nation of 50 states and from a country where only white men with property could vote to one where nearly all citizens over 18 can cast a ballot. Through the years, other Presidents have played a major role in transforming American democracy and civic life and have overcome many challenges at home and abroad. What do you think? Was our first President the most important?

Yes—he shaped America

George Washington is called "the father of our nation" for a reason. The US as we know it would not exist without him. He was a great leader and was so popular that he was unanimously elected President—twice. As President, Washington had no example to follow and had to set up the entire government. He created a Presidential cabinet, appointed all the US Supreme Court justices, and chose the nation's permanent capital, which bears his name. In fact, he was so important that many places in the country are named for him, including Washington state, 88 cities and towns, and nearly 5,000 streets.

No—others made their mark

Washington was important, but there's a big difference between setting up a new government for a country of about 4 million people and leading a nation that now has a population of about 340 million. And Presidents who served later faced major challenges at home that Washington didn't. For example, Abraham Lincoln guided the US through the Civil War and helped end slavery. Franklin D. Roosevelt created the New Deal to help Americans in the Great Depression. Washington also didn't have to lead the US through complex global crises like World War I and World War II. It's doubtful that he could have handled all that.

YES Three reasons our first President was the most important

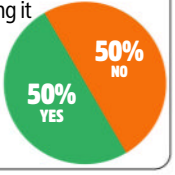
1. **Without George Washington, the US and the Presidency might not even exist.**
2. **He had to set up the entire government, and many of the systems and policies he established are still in place.**
3. **If he's not the most important, he wouldn't have so many cities, towns, and streets named after him.**

NO Three reasons our first President was not the most important

1. **It's easier to set up a small country than it is to govern a huge, complicated one.**
2. **Later Presidents dealt with much tougher domestic issues, like slavery, the Civil War, and the Great Depression.**
3. **The US has a major international role now. Later Presidents have faced global crises that Washington couldn't have handled.**

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, our poll asked if we should stop singing at movie musicals. Your votes were a tie between belting it out in theaters and saving the singing for another time.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote YES if you think our first President was the most important or NO if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.

GETTY IMAGES

New hero behind the shield

Anthony Mackie makes history as Captain America in the latest Marvel film.

In the film *Captain America: Brave New World*, premiering in theaters on February 14, the iconic superhero is played by Anthony Mackie. The actor is best known for his role as Sam Wilson ("The Falcon") in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU, where superheroes have interconnected stories). At the end of *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* (2021), his character became the first Black Captain America.

The new film

Mackie, age 46, grew up in New Orleans, Louisiana. He always loved acting and drama, and he attended the prestigious Juilliard School in New York City. He made his big-screen debut in the 2002 film *8 Mile*, alongside Eminem, and has since appeared in numerous films, including the 2008 Oscar-winning war drama *The Hurt Locker*. When he is not acting, Mackie repairs roofs in communities hit by natural disasters, including his hometown of New Orleans. He has repaired more than 150 roofs.

Mackie's Marvel journey began in 2014 with his first appearance as Sam Wilson in *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*. Sam, a former US Air Force rescue specialist with a high-tech winged suit, quickly became a fan favorite. In *Brave New World*, Sam now wields Captain America's shield, succeeding Chris Evans, who portrayed the hero for eight years. When Sam meets the newly elected US President Thaddeus Ross, he is tasked with uncovering a plot that could destabilize the world.

Mackie has said that Captain America shows what is possible when you believe in yourself and others. He called his character in the new film "a man who keeps his word and has honor, dignity, and integrity—someone trustworthy and dependable."

Anthony Mackie

COMICS HISTORY
Captain America, created by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, first appeared in the 1941 comic book Captain America Comics No. 1.

A mission to inspire

Poet Amanda Gorman's new picture book, *Girls on the Rise*, is already a best-seller. Based on Gorman's poetry and illustrated by Loveis Wise, it celebrates women's achievements and empowers young girls to use their voices for change. Gorman made history at age 22 as the youngest inaugural poet when she read her poem "The Hill We Climb" at Joe Biden's 2021 Presidential inauguration. Now age 26, she said this new book reminded her why she loves storytelling for kids: "When I write for a child, I am writing to an incredibly smart mind."

Amanda Gorman

Armia Khalil

Sculpting his heritage

Armia Khalil, a security guard at the prestigious Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, now has a sculpture on display at the museum. His carved wood piece, *Hope – I Am a Morning Scarab*, is featured in the exhibit *Flight Into Egypt*. Khalil, age 45, grew up in Egypt and sculpted clay figures by the Nile River. He immigrated to New York in 2006 and took on a security role at the Met in 2012. There, he met a curator who put his work in the exhibit. Inspired by the scarab beetle, an ancient Egyptian symbol of hope, Khalil said he wants his piece to say, "Continue to hope."

OVERHEARD

"It's never too early to start caring about issues that are happening in the world."

Lucia de la Garza, age 18, guitarist for the rock band The Linda Lindas, on the importance of young people engaging with current events

GETTY IMAGES (3); MARVEL STUDIOS; GRAHAM DICKIE/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

TINY FLYERS
The world's smallest bird is the bee hummingbird, which weighs about as much as a cashew nut.

Hundreds of hummingbirds were counted in 2024.

Surprising encounters

During last year's count, several birds were spotted in unusual places. The summer tanager (below), which usually spends the winter in Central or South America, was seen in California. Canadians found white-crowned sparrows and Lapland longspurs in Saskatchewan, far north of their typical winter range.

Great Backyard Bird Count set to start

From February 14 to 17, people worldwide will take part in an annual event called the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). Anyone can participate by counting and identifying birds and then sharing the findings on a website or app.

Since 1998, researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Audubon Society have organized the GBBC to gather data on wild birds. Another organization, Birds Canada, joined in 2009.

During the four-day event, the groups ask bird lovers to become citizen scientists (people who volunteer to collect data for scientific research) by spending at least 15 minutes counting the birds they see in an outdoor area, such as a local park or the yard outside their home. People can join the event by creating a free account on the GBBC website birdcount.org.

People of all ages can participate.

For beginners, the Merlin Bird ID app can help identify birds. More experienced birdwatchers can also submit observations on eBird, a website and mobile app. A map on the GBBC website allows users to watch observations being shared in real time from around the world.

Every entry helps researchers learn more about where the birds are, whether their populations are changing, and how to protect them. "When it is winter in one place, it is summer in another," Becca Rodomsky-Bish, a project co-leader at Cornell, told *The Week Junior*. "It is important to document them year-round to understand how different birds are doing in different places."

Last year, about 642,000 people participated in the GBBC. About 7,920 species of birds were identified worldwide, with 676 reported in the US. Birdwatchers in India noticed several vulnerable species, including the white-headed starling, forest owlet, and Andaman serpent-eagle. Some lucky birdwatchers in Hawaii got to see the 'i'iwi, one of the state's rarest birds. And people in Germany spotted the largest flock of birds, reporting 4 million bramblings in the sky.

The team is excited to see what happens this year. "Birds are globally engaged in amazing activity," said Rodomsky-Bish. "It is important to keep documenting birds year-over-year so we can see changes and trends emerging."

PLACE OF THE WEEK

White Sands National Park, New Mexico

Located in the northern part of the Chihuahuan Desert, this park encompasses 115 square miles of white sand dunes. Creatures like the Apache pocket mouse, bleached earless lizard, and sand-treader camel cricket have adapted to this environment by developing light shades that blend in with their surroundings. There are more than 600 species of invertebrates (species without a backbone) in the park, including sand scorpions, tarantulas, and walking sticks. The White Sands pupfish lives in four small bodies of water in the park and is found nowhere else in the world.

A bleached earless lizard

POPULAR POOCH
A sheepadoodle named Bunny has more than 8 million followers on TikTok, where her owner posts videos of her pressing buttons.

Buttons may help dogs express themselves.

Can pets really use buttons to talk?

In recent years, videos of "talking" pets have become popular on the internet. Many feature dogs pressing buttons that play audio recordings of words like "treat" or "outside." Some pets even press multiple buttons in a row, producing phrases like "come play."

Whether these actions count as speech is a subject of debate. Using data from an app, scientists in California recently analyzed the button use of 152 pets. They found that dogs created some two-word combinations—such as "food" and "water" or "outside" and "potty"—more often than they would if they were randomly pushing buttons. Researcher Federico Rossano told *The Washington Post* the dogs "might be communicating the way a 2-year-old human might, which is more sophisticated than previously believed."

Other scientists are skeptical that the animals are using language like humans do. Clive Wynne from Arizona State University thinks dogs string words together because this gets the biggest reaction from their owners. "I think it's all good clean fun, but I don't think we learn anything about dogs by doing it," Wynne told *The New York Times*.

Animal of the week: Pygmy hippo

After 116,000 votes were cast in an online naming contest, a baby pygmy hippo at Virginia's Metro Richmond Zoo has been given the name Poppy. The female calf was born underwater, which is uncommon for this endangered species.

- **LIFE SPAN:** 27 to 45 years in human care
- **HABITAT:** Forests and swamps in West Africa
- **SIZE:** 4.5 to 6 feet in length, 350 to 600 pounds
- **DIET:** Roots, stems, leaves, ferns, and grasses
- **FUN FACT:** Although they have stubby legs, pygmy hippos can run about 18 miles per hour.

Good week / Bad week

Sunflower sea stars

Experts are growing sunflower sea stars in labs after the critically endangered creatures almost disappeared from the California coast. Some could be released into the Pacific Ocean to eat purple sea urchins, which are destroying kelp forests.

Freshwater animals

Almost a quarter of the world's freshwater animal species are at risk of extinction, according to a new study. Pollution, dams, agriculture, and climate change pose threats to 24% of the species studied, including fish, crabs, and dragonflies.

ASK AN EXPERT: "Why are some animals herbivores, some carnivores, and some omnivores?" Addy, 11, California

John J. Wiens
Ecology and evolutionary biology professor, University of Arizona

Giraffes are herbivores.

Animals eat different things to avoid competing with one another. Early animals were likely meat eaters (carnivores), then evolved to eat some plants (omnivores) or mainly plants (herbivores). Those with high body temperatures get help from heat-loving bacteria in their guts to digest green leaves.

Do you have a question for an animal expert? Send it to *hello@theweekjunior.com*. Find out more about U of A ecology and evolutionary biology at eeb.arizona.edu.

GETTY IMAGES (4); METRO RICHMOND ZOO; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (5)

A northern land of ice,

Iceland is a country of many natural wonders and treasured traditions.

The landscape of Iceland is known for its glaciers and fiery volcanoes. Discover this European country's spellbinding beauty, history, and culture.

Where is Iceland?

Iceland is an island nation in northern Europe that is about the same size as Kentucky. The country just about touches the Arctic Circle with the Greenland Sea to its north, Norwegian Sea to its east, and Atlantic Ocean to its south and west. Iceland is often called the "land of fire and ice" for being the location of Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajökull, and others like it, as well as many active volcanoes. It has more than 3,000 miles of coastline with black sand beaches and a dramatic landscape with lava fields, waterfalls, and hundreds of natural hot springs. Half of the nation's population lives in and around its bustling capital, Reykjavík.

Turf houses

Early history

Centuries ago, Iceland was a remote island that was settled by the Vikings and Celtic people sometime between the years 870 and 930. The Vikings were a group of seafaring warriors from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, and the Celts were of Indo-European origin. Ingólfr Arnarson from Norway is believed to be the first person to permanently settle on the island in about 874. Over the next few years, many people followed from neighboring lands. These settlers built "turf houses" to survive the island's harsh weather. The houses are partially underground and were made using stone, wood, and turf (grass) roofs.

LAVA LAND
The most recent volcanic eruptions in Iceland started on November 20, 2024, on the Reykjanes peninsula and lasted for 18 days.

DID YOU KNOW?
Nearly 100% of the country's electricity runs on renewable resources, including geothermal energy.

Animals of Iceland

Puffin

This marine bird arrives in huge flocks to Iceland in summer. A majority of North Atlantic puffins breed in the country and nest on its cliffs. Puffins are nicknamed "clowns of the ocean" for their colorful facial markings.

Icelandic horse

Icelanders have more than 100 names for this horse breed. Icelandic horses were brought by Norwegian settlers thousands of years ago. The animals are known for their intelligence and friendly nature.

GETTY IMAGES (7); SHUTTERSTOCK (2)

fire, and light

Northern lights create a colorful sky over Kirkjufell, Iceland.

Whale

In the summer, whales—including the blue whale, baleen whale, and humpback (right)—are drawn to Iceland's subarctic waters rich in krill. The northern city of Húsavík is called Iceland's whale-watching capital.

Arctic fox

Iceland's only native land mammal, the Arctic fox is believed to have settled there over 10,000 years ago. The species was prized for its fur and survived years of hunting after humans' arrival.

Independence Day in Reykjavík

Growing as a nation

As their society was forming, Icelanders founded the Althing, one of the oldest national parliaments (governments) in the world, in the year 930. It made laws and settled disputes. Another major milestone came in the early 1200s, when the Icelanders' sagas were written. They are a series of prose narratives about early life on the island. The sagas are central to Icelandic culture and considered a significant literary work from the Middle Ages (about 476 to the 14th century). Even today, many Icelanders are able to read the sagas in Old Norse, the language they were originally composed in. Between 1262 and 1944, the country was variously under the control of Norway and Denmark until it became a republic in 1944.

The Ring Road

A cultural hub

Modern Iceland is one of the most gender-equal nations in the world. For 15 years, it has consistently topped the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, which measures gender equality in countries around the world. Iceland's policies enable both men and women to balance work and family life. Millions of visitors are drawn to the island in summer to experience the midnight sun and in winter to witness the northern lights (aurora borealis). The Ring Road that loops around the country for more than 800 miles has iconic stops such as Thingvellir National Park (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) and Diamond Beach, a black sand beach where chunks of ice float from the Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon. The country also has a vibrant arts scene packed with film and music festivals. The National Museum of Iceland, in Reykjavík, showcases Iceland's cultural history.

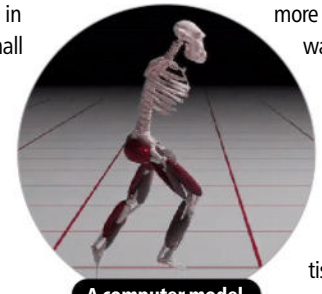
An artist's rendering of what Lucy might have looked like

MUSICAL NAME
The scientists who found Lucy's fossil often listened to the Beatles song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," which is how she got her name.

Humans evolved to run faster

Scientists used advanced computer modeling to determine that a prehistoric human ancestor couldn't run as well as Homo sapiens (modern humans). The findings are helping them learn more about how humans evolved (changed very slowly over time) to run in order to survive.

The species, called Australopithecus afarensis, lived in East Africa about 3.7 million years ago. It was first discovered in 1974, when the skeleton of a small female was found. Named Lucy, she was the most complete fossil of an early human.



A computer model of Lucy running

Australopithecus afarensis gave scientists insight into the evolution of humans from apes to Homo sapiens. It had a small skull and long arms like an ape, but its spine and knees were more like a human's. That meant Australopithecus afarensis could still swing from trees but also walked upright on two legs, rather than on all fours. "Lucy bridges the gap between our more tree-dwelling ancestors and modern humans, who walk and run efficiently on two legs," said Karl Bates, from the University of Liverpool in the UK, who led the recent research.

To learn more about how Australopithecus afarensis ran, Bates and his team developed 3D computer models of Lucy's skeleton that simulated her running. They compared those with computer simulations of a modern human running.

Lucy's fossil did not have any soft tissue, like muscles and tendons, which meant scientists didn't know exactly what they were like. For the study, they created 3D models of Lucy with a range of muscles and tendon types. In some, she was more like an ape, while in others she was more like a human, with large leg muscles and a longer Achilles tendon, which help us run. The apelike models ran slowest, while the ones with humanlike muscles and tendons ran faster.

No matter what the soft tissue was like, however, the Lucy models never ran faster than 11 miles per hour. An elite athlete today can run faster than 20 miles per hour. The models also indicated that Lucy could not run for as long or as far as modern humans do. "She was not a natural runner," Bates told *The New York Times*.

The researchers think later humans may have evolved to have features like longer and stronger legs in order to become better runners. Improved running abilities would have made them better hunters, which would have helped them survive.

Lucy's hand bones

Humans descended from apes.

Lucy and other early human ancestors may have been able to make and use tools, according to a recent study. Researchers analyzed the hands of three Australopithecus species, including Australopithecus afarensis. They closely examined places on the hand where soft tissue attached to bone, which offer clues to how the hands functioned and how the species used them.

All three species had hands that were capable of grasping, pinching, and gripping objects, like tools, to varying degrees. The most recent species, Australopithecus sediba, lived 1.95 million to 1.78 million years ago and had the most humanlike hand. The study doesn't prove that the species used tools, but it does show that they had the ability to do so.

Scientists say our brains think slowly

The human brain is powered by more than 85 billion neurons (nerve cells that carry information) that send electrical signals. Despite all that brain power, a new study by scientists at Caltech, in California, found that humans think surprisingly slowly.

The researchers determined that our brains have a "speed limit" for processing information, which is about 10 bits (the smallest units of digital information) per second. They got this number by converting the brain's electrical signals into bits and calculating how many bits people used to perform tasks like writing, playing video games, or solving a Rubik's Cube.

The team also calculated that we absorb sensory information about the world around us—like smell, sight, and sound—at about 1 billion bits per second. This means that our brains are processing information 100 million times more slowly than we gather it, while also collecting huge amounts of data that they don't appear to use. And for the most part, we can process only one thought at a time. But why?

FAST FACT
The average human brain weighs about 3 pounds, which is about the same weight as a half gallon of milk.

The team has more work to do to find out, but they think the answer could have to do with survival. Early humans had one main goal: to navigate toward food and away from predators. Our brains could still be following this simple way of understanding the world around us. If that's the case, then thinking at 10 bits per second is fast enough.

Our brains help us gather and process information and make decisions.

A rendering of the LignoSat

Wood satellite reaches Earth's orbit

The world's first wooden satellite successfully reached Earth's orbit, about 250 miles above the planet. Called LignoSat, the mug-size object was designed by Japan's space agency and launched in November 2024. LignoSat is part of an effort to make biodegradable (breaks down naturally) spacecraft and reduce the amount of trash in space.

Since 1957, satellites have been made from metal, which can withstand the extreme conditions of space. However, metal doesn't biodegrade. There are currently about 3,000 metal satellites in space that are no longer operating.

Wood, on the other hand, can handle conditions in space and also disintegrates when it re-enters Earth's atmosphere. The team of scientists tested three types of wood and chose magnolia, which is the lightest one. LignoSat will orbit Earth for six months before it burns up upon re-entry.

AMAZING INVENTION

A vacuum that picks up objects

The Saros Z70

A new robot vacuum does more than suck up dust from the floor. The Saros Z70 also has a robotic arm that picks up objects and deposits them in a designated spot, like the trash or a storage basket. The arm, called the OmniGrip, can grab socks, tissues, small toys, shoes, or other items that weigh two thirds of a pound or less.

The Saros Z70 uses cameras and lights to navigate and has strong suction power for vacuuming. You can also train it to recognize specific items, and when you ask where they are, a voice assistant will tell you.

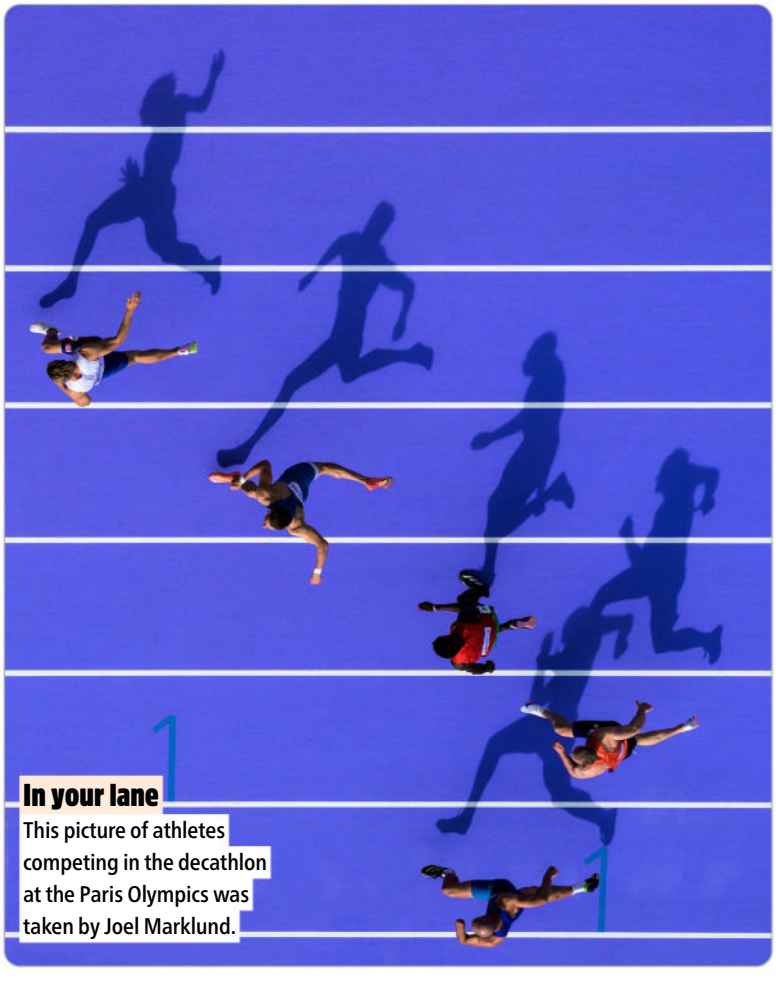
GETTY IMAGES; KYOTO UNIVERSITY; ROBOROCK; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (2); K.T. BATES ET AL., CURRENT BIOLOGY

Photos of the week

2025 WORLD SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS FINALISTS

Good try
In this shot by Abbie Parr, the Marlins' center fielder dives for the ball at a game in Minnesota.

Defying gravity
A Japanese gymnast competes at the Paris Olympics in this photo by Ezra Shaw.



In your lane
This picture of athletes competing in the decathlon at the Paris Olympics was taken by Joel Marklund.

EZRA SHAW; PIM RAS; JOEL MARKLUND; ABBIE PARR; SARAH MEYSSONIER; HENRIQUE CASINHAS

Photos of the week

Making a splash
At the Paris Olympics, Pim Ras captured this image of a Dutch artistic swimmer.

Shot from below
Henrique Casinhas took this picture of a surfer on his board.

Feet first
Judo fighters clash in this photo by Sarah Meyssonnier, taken at the Paris Olympics.

A Lim Kim with her Tournament of Champions trophy

WOW! The record for the most LPGA victories, set by American Kathy Whitworth, is 88.

LPGA beginnings

The LPGA Tour is the longest-running professional women's sports league. It was formed in 1950 by 13 women, all of whom are now members of the World Golf Hall of Fame. The winner of the first LPGA tournament, the Tampa Open, was American golfer Polly Riley.

Women's golf tour turns 75

The LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association) has kicked off its 75th anniversary season. The action began with the annual Tournament of Champions, which was held at the Lake Nona Golf & Country Club in Orlando, Florida, from January 30 to February 2. The winner was South Korea's A Lim Kim, who finished with a four-day total score that was 20 under par (the expected score).

The Tournament of Champions is a fun and exciting event that is unlike others during the season. It features a field of 32 pros who are tournament winners from the past two years. Among the competitors were the world's number one player, American Nelly Korda, who won seven titles last year and was the 2024 LPGA Tour Player of the Year. Another headliner was Lydia Ko of New Zealand, the tournament's defending champion. She is ranked number two in the world and won the gold in women's golf at the Paris Olympics last summer.

Nelly Korda

Kim, who was ranked number 55 coming into the tournament, demonstrated consistent skill and composure throughout the competition and was at the top of the leaderboard at the end of the first three days. Heading into the final day of play, she remained in first until Korda, who was in a group ahead of her on the course, briefly tied things up on the 15th hole. However, Kim ended up making a 20-foot putt for a birdie (one stroke under par) on the same hole and regained the lead. She then birdied two out of the three remaining holes, which helped her clinch the win. Korda finished in second place, two strokes behind Kim. After the event, Kim's world ranking rose to number 30.

Celebrities from outside the sport of golf competed in their own portion of the event. It used a scoring system that awarded points based on a competitor's performance on each hole. Former NHL (National Hockey League) star Joe Pavelski claimed the top spot, finishing five points ahead of baseball player Jeff McNeil of the New York Mets. Other notable participants included US soccer legend Brandi Chastain and *Dancing with the Stars* co-host Alfonso Ribiero.

THIS WEEK'S WINNERS...

MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL

One of the biggest rivalry games in the sport took place on February 1, when Duke University, ranked number two in the country, played the unranked University of North Carolina. Duke won, 87–70, and the team's star freshman, Cooper Flagg, scored 21 points, grabbed eight rebounds, and dished out seven assists. Another Duke freshman, Kon Kneuppel, scored 22 points and had five assists in the game.

Kon Kneuppel with the ball

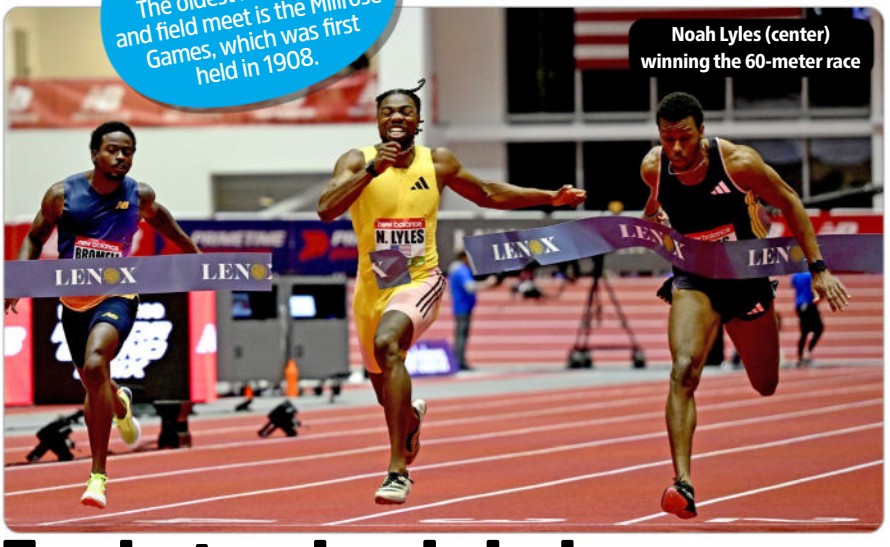
COLLEGE GYMNASTICS

Sixth-ranked UCLA upset fifth-ranked Michigan State at a meet on February 1. UCLA clinched the win thanks to Olympic gold medalist Jordan Chiles, who earned a perfect 10 on the floor.

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

The multi-day Pro Bowl Games, an event where NFL stars compete in skills contests and flag football, ended on February 2. The National Football Conference beat the American Football Conference for the third straight year.

CLASSIC EVENT
The oldest indoor track and field meet is the Millrose Games, which was first held in 1908.



Noah Lyles (center) winning the 60-meter race

Track stars begin indoor season

On February 2, top track and field athletes gathered at the New Balance Indoor Grand Prix in Boston, Massachusetts, for their first event of the season. Many Olympic medalists and world champions participated, making for thrilling races.

One of the most anticipated events was the men's 60-meter race, which is unique to indoor track. It featured a showdown between US star Noah Lyles, the reigning Olympic champion in the 100-meters, and Italy's Marcell Jacobs, who won the 100 at the Olympics in 2021. Lyles sprinted to the finish in 6.52 seconds and won. Terrence Jones of the Bahamas came in second, PJ Austin of the US was third, and Jacobs was fourth.

Another American winner was Quincy Wilson, age 17, the youngest male track and field medalist at the 2024 Olympics in Paris. He ran the 400-meter in 45.66 seconds, the fastest indoor time for someone his age. Among the other victorious US stars at the meet was Olympian Rai Benjamin, who won the 300-meters.

On the women's side, one of the most exciting races was the 60-meter hurdles, another event that only takes place indoors. Two stars in the race were world record holder Devynne Charlton of the Bahamas and Masai Russell of the US, who won the 100-meter hurdles in Paris. Russell won again in Boston, finishing one-hundredth of a second ahead of fellow American Grace Stark. Charlton came in third, four-hundredths of a second later.

Several other American women also won, including Heather Maclean, who placed first in both the mile run and the 1,500-meter enroute (a distance that is part of the mile race).

COACH OF THE WEEK

Coach's Name: **Jimmy Dean Freeman**

Team: **West Los Angeles Little League**

"Coach Jimmy has a positive attitude and teaches parents to support their kids. Everyone wants to be on his team. He is kind and helped a lot of kids in our league who lost their homes in the recent wildfires. He coordinated with families to give kids equipment they needed to play baseball or softball. He also arranged for them to get gifts to uplift their spirits. We love Jimmy!" Hazel, 10, and Rudy, 8, California

To nominate a Coach of the Week, send your coach's name, photo, sport, and team to *hello@theweekjunior.com.* Include your name, age, state, and a few reasons why your coach is great.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Caroline Castans

AGE: 20 SPORT: SOCCER
TEAM: UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

Early years I started playing soccer with my friends when we were 3 or 4 years old. At first, I did it just to have fun, but once we started getting better and more competitive, I stuck with it.

Role models Growing up, I loved watching Julie Johnson (now Ertz) and Mal Pugh (now Swanson) play soccer. They were always in the air scoring and were so entertaining.

Training plan We practice at least four or five times a week, and we also lift weights. Almost every day on the field we have passing patterns, which is about getting touches and getting your feet warmed up. On some days, we end practice with shooting or attacking-type games. Those are the best.

Time off Making sure I balance my social life and soccer life is really important. I try to do things I enjoy, like baking cookies with my roommates.

Major growth Over the past few years, I've gained self-confidence. I now know what I can give to the team, and it's a lot. What helped was playing in games and making moments happen, having teammates remind me I'm part of the success, and having coaches who bring me up, not down.

Big victory Winning the Big 12 tournament in November was really exciting. It was a hard-fought game until the last second, so when it ended, the win felt so great and deserved.

Her advice Have fun and don't stress about playing time or messing up. Looking back, I wish I'd had more fun and taken more chances.

GETTY IMAGES (2); KU ATHLETICS; ON LEFT PAGE: LPGA; GETTY IMAGES (2)

FUN FACT
The youngest person to host *Saturday Night Live* was actress Drew Barrymore, who was 7 years old at the time.

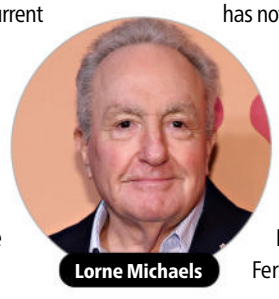
Some of *Saturday Night Live*'s stars and guests

SNL celebrates 50 years on TV

The popular sketch comedy series *Saturday Night Live* is known for its funny stars and memorable characters.

An award-winning TV series is celebrating a major anniversary. *Saturday Night Live*, also known as *SNL*, is a weekly comedy sketch show that is performed live and is in its 50th season. It is known for funny sketches and videos, impressions of famous people, jokes about current events, and music. It will be honored on February 16 in *SNL50: The Anniversary Special*, airing on NBC at 8 p.m. ET. *SNL* is rated TV-14.

Saturday Night Live, based in New York City, made its premiere in October 1975. At the time, it stood out because it starred young performers doing an unusual type of comedy live on TV, at 11:30 p.m. ET. Each week, the show had a different host—popular actors, athletes, singers, or politicians—and a musical guest. The format has not changed much over the years.



Lorne Michaels

SNL has originated many well-known characters, including the Coneheads, Wayne and Garth, and Operaman. There have been 165 cast members, and dozens have become stars off the show, including Eddie Murphy (Donkey in *Shrek*), Will Ferrell (Buddy in *Elf*), Amy Poehler (Joy in *Inside Out*), Kate McKinnon (Weird Barbie in *Barbie*), and Bowen Yang (Pfannee in *Wicked*).

Creating *SNL* is difficult, and writers work nearly nonstop from Tuesday to Saturday. Sets are built starting on Thursday, and on Saturday there is a rehearsal in front of an audience. Some sketches get cut at the last minute. *SNL* has coined many catchphrases, but its signature line is when cast members yell at the end of each episode's opening sketch: "Live from New York, it's Saturday night!"

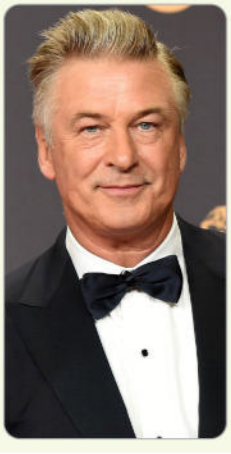
Lorne Michaels, who created and oversees the show, thought of the line before the first show aired. "I just wanted to get the title in," he has said. "It's now just part of the culture."

3 facts about the show

Longest-serving cast member

Kenan Thompson (right) has been on *SNL* for 22 seasons. When he was younger, he was on Nickelodeon's sketch comedy show *All That* and the sitcom *Kenan & Kel*.

Most frequent guest host



Actor Alec Baldwin (right) first hosted *SNL* in 1990 and has done it a total of 17 times. He also spent five seasons as a recurring guest star playing President Donald Trump. In 2017, he won an Emmy (top TV award) for that role.

Most frequent musical guest

Rocker Dave Grohl (right) has been on the show 15 times. He has performed as the lead singer of his current band, Foo Fighters; as the drummer of his earlier band, Nirvana; and as a guest musician with other artists.

ORIGIN STORY
Paddington was inspired by a teddy bear that author Michael Bond saw in a shop near London's Paddington Station in 1956.

Paddington in Peru

Paddington returns to theaters

The famous marmalade-loving bear created by author Michael Bond is headed on a new adventure. *Paddington in Peru*, the third film in a popular franchise, will arrive in theaters on February 14. It combines live action with a computer-animated bear and is a thrilling journey about family and discovery.

The first *Paddington* film came out in 2014, and a sequel followed in 2017. Paddington, an Andean bear, was born in a Peruvian jungle, but stories about him have mostly focused on his life with the Brown family in London, England. In the new movie, he returns to Peru with the Browns to search for his missing Aunt Lucy. In the process, they must uncover the secrets of the legendary lost city of El Dorado.

The film was directed by Dougal Wilson. He told *The Week Junior* it would have been too hard to take the entire cast and crew to the jungle, so he relied on creative filmmaking to make it appear like they were actually there. He and a small team traveled to Peru and other parts of South America to do research and capture footage of the rainforest and important locations.

Dougal Wilson

The actors filmed on sets in the UK, and everything was combined afterward. The animated Paddington is added to the film after it is shot, so a performer wearing his hat and coat delivers his lines on set. For action scenes, stunt performers and physical comedians help model his movements.

Wilson said Paddington has been a beloved character for so many years because of his tolerant, innocent, and warm, funny personality. He hopes moviegoers will be inspired by the bear's outlook, which is "to see the best in everybody and try to see their point of view."

READER RECOMMENDS

Pororo: The Little Penguin *(Netflix or Prime Video)*
"This show was immediately popular when it came out in South Korea and then in the US in 2003. It is about the silly adventures of a young penguin named Pororo and his friends. Wherever the group goes, they always find something fun to do. The characters are very cute, and the show has very fun episode titles and plots. My favorite episode is 'Let's Put On a Play!' In that one, the characters produce and perform in a play about the story *The Three Little Pigs*. I also love the show's playful music and that it teaches viewers about being a good friend and having fun." Hannah, 10, Illinois

Do you have a film or TV show to recommend to other kids? Send your review to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

THIS WEEK'S WATCH LIST

Harlem Ice
(Disney+)
This new five-part documentary series centers on Figure Skating in Harlem, an organization in New York City that teaches the sport to young women of color. The series follows several skaters as they break barriers and prepare for competitions and performances.

The Voice
(NBC)
The hit singing competition is back for its 27th season. Country singer Kelsea Ballerini has joined the show as a full-time coach, taking a seat next to returning coaches Michael Bublé—last season's winner—John Legend, and Adam Levine, one of the show's original stars.

Expedition Killer Whale
(PBS App) (PBS.org) (PBS) February 12 at 8 p.m. ET
Follow scientists and filmmakers as they study killer whales in Antarctica. The team was able to observe the animals' intelligence and teamwork strategies, including how they create waves to hunt seals on floating ice.

STUDIOCANAL SAS; GETTY IMAGES; ICONIX ENTERTAINMENT CO.; DISNEY/STEPHANIE KEITH; ART STREIBER/NBC; JULIETTE HENNEQUIN; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

RAD RIDE
Mario Kart 8 Deluxe is the best-selling game for the Nintendo Switch.

The Nintendo Switch 2

New Switch console is on the way

Nintendo recently made a major announcement that excited the gaming world. The company released a video revealing that the Nintendo Switch 2, a new version of its popular handheld console, will come out later this year.

The original Nintendo Switch debuted in 2017. Since then, Nintendo has sold nearly 150 million of the consoles and more than 1.3 billion Switch games. Only the handheld Nintendo DS, which came out in 2004, has sold more consoles for Nintendo. One big reason for the Switch's success is the fact that it can connect to TVs and be played on the go.

Many fans knew a new Switch was coming, but Nintendo has been secretive about when it would arrive. Even now, the company hasn't released specifics about the timing of the sequel system, only saying more details will come out in April. Nintendo did reveal, however, that the Switch 2 will have a slightly larger screen and a wider kickstand than the older one, and the device will be mostly black. It will also be more powerful and have better graphics. The Joy-Con controllers will feature a new "C" button on the right-hand controller, but its purpose remains a mystery. In addition to that, there are theories that the controllers will be able to be used as a mouse.

The Switch 2 will have backward compatibility, so it will be able to play old games but not all of them. As for new games, the Switch 2 video had a Mario Kart scene, which suggests a ninth edition may be coming. Online sleuths also believe a 3D Mario game and a new Pokémon adventure are on the way too.

PODCAST OF THE WEEK

LITTLE KIDS, BIG HEARTS

Major podcast platforms

A longtime educator hosts this show, which was created for kids and adults. It features young guests and is filled with conversations that help build social and emotional skills. Newer episodes explore challenges such as expressing gratitude, grappling with unfairness, and inspiring empathy.

WEBSITE OF THE WEEK

SKYJO ONLINE

skyjo.online

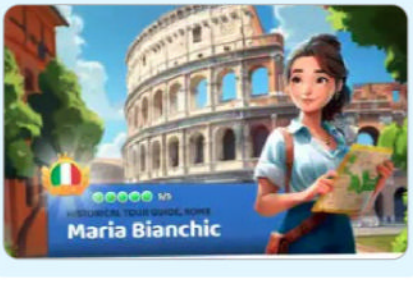
This site lets you play the popular card game Skyjo online with friends and family. In the game, players get 12 numbered cards each, then take turns revealing and replacing their cards so they add up to the lowest score possible. Points are tallied after each hand, and you try to avoid hitting 100.

APP OF THE WEEK

BACKPACKER GO!

Apple App Store, Google Play

Put your history and geography knowledge to the test in this adventure app that resembles a board game. Players are transported to Paris, New York City, or Rio de Janeiro, then have to roll the dice, answer questions about that city, and help locals get around. You'll learn fun facts along the way.



NINTENDO (2); SPARKLER LEARNING; MAGILANO; QWI GAMES AB

BOOK OF THE WEEK

City Spies: London Calling

By James Ponti

(Aladdin)

The sixth book in the electrifying City Spies series kicks off on the streets of Istanbul, Turkey. Annie, whose father and brother are involved in a global spy ring, realizes she's being followed by two men who are trying to kidnap her. She tries to elude them by jumping on a tram, but they're still on her tail. When she ends up near a river, Annie, an exceptional swimmer, dives in and loses the men. As her family tries to find her, other members of the spy ring stay behind in Turkey to provide protection for a royal wedding. Annie's brother, Cairo, finds an encrypted message in a sweet shop and believes Annie wants to meet them in Rome in two days. But just minutes before the rendezvous, Annie's family realizes they're at the wrong location. As they're rushing across the city, a plot against the royal family is unfolding. This heart-pumping international adventure, which reaches its climax in London, is filled with dramatic twists and turns. Thanks to vivid descriptions of real-life landmarks, you'll feel like you're traveling along with the secret agents.

ASK THE AUTHOR

James Ponti

We spoke to the author of the Book of the Week.

What inspired this story?
I went to London to see my son and got the idea for this book while I was visiting Buckingham Palace.

How do you research each city?
I visit the city and find people who live there because they can really show me what the city is like, including any hidden things. I also do a lot of online research and read travel books about each place.

Favorite city?
I have four: New York, London, Paris, and Rome. I could visit them every year.

Where would you like the spies to go next?
I feel like they need to go to Australia, but I've never been there. The flight is so long!

How do you like to spend your free time?
I love reading and watching mysteries and being with my family.

READER RECOMMENDS

Vote for your favorite books!

Have you read any books you've enjoyed so much you wish all kids knew about them? Contribute to our "50 Books Kids Love Most" list for 2025! The list, with quotes from readers, will be published in *The Week Junior* in June. We're looking for at least 100 kids to fill out our voting form. If you'd like to participate, have an adult email us at *hello@theweekjunior.com* with Books Kids Love in the subject line, and we'll send the form to them. Happy reading!

4 new books to mark Black History Month

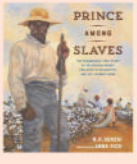
Enjoy finding out about important people and events with these picks.

King: A Life

By Jonathan Eig with Yohuru Williams and Michael G. Long

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

This is the award-winning biography of Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968), adapted for young people. Read about his childhood and how he became an important leader in the 20th century. The many photographs are compelling. *Ages 12 and up*



Prince Among Slaves

By N.H. Senzai, illustrated by Anna Rich

(Nancy Paulsen Books)

This picture book spotlights Abdulrahman Sori, a prince in Africa who was captured and sold into slavery in Mississippi in the 1780s. He guided other enslaved men, who looked to him for leadership. He was set free, but his freedom was bittersweet because he had to leave his children behind. *Ages 7–10*

The Swans of Harlem

By Karen Valby

(Delacorte)

In this book adapted for young people, five Black ballerinas who performed with the Dance Theatre of Harlem in New York City in the 1970s describe how they persevered in the dance world despite the racist treatment they faced. Chapters alternate among the perspectives of each dancer. *Ages 12 and up*

Will's Race for Home

By Jewell Parker Rhodes

(Little, Brown Books for Young Readers)

In this historical fiction novel, 12-year-old Will and his dad set out on a perilous 400-mile journey from Texas to Oklahoma in 1889. His father is among the thousands of sharecroppers (farmers who grow crops on someone else's land) who are rushing to claim land of their own. The story is fast-paced and exciting. *Ages 8–12*

BOOKS: COURTESY OF PUBLISHERS; AUTHOR: ELENA SEIBERT; GETTY IMAGES

WOW! More than 8 billion candy hearts—also known as conversation hearts—are sold around Valentine's Day each year.

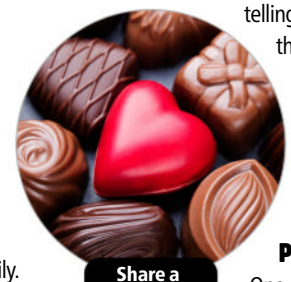
Help others feel special

This Valentine's Day, show family and friends what they mean to you.

Valentine's Day, which is celebrated on February 14, has origins that date back more than 1,000 years. While traditionally it is a holiday most commonly associated with love and affection, nowadays it can honor all types of relationships that bring people joy. In addition, Random Acts of Kindness Day is on February 17, which is another reason to spread a little happiness! Here are some ideas for sharing love and kindness now or anytime.

Get in the spirit

You can help family get in a festive mood with some decorations. Cut paper hearts from construction paper, punch holes in them, and then use string to hang them across a shelf, mantel, or bookcase. Another fun way to decorate is to write messages on paper hearts and stick them in unexpected places to surprise your family. You could put an "I love you" heart on the bathroom mirror or leave a note that says "You brighten my day" on a desk or in a backpack.



Share a sweet treat.

Spread positivity

You can make an extra effort to spread positive vibes on and around Valentine's Day. Offer a friend a genuine compliment, for example, such as praising their amazing art project or their dedication to their sport, or thank a family member for being a good listener. You can also make others feel included. For example, you could invite someone new to sit with you at lunch or ask a family member to do a puzzle with you.

Go homemade

It's a longtime tradition to make valentines for the special people in your life. On your card, write a short sentence telling the person how much you appreciate them. You could mention a special quality they have or a fun memory from the past year. Homemade treats are another way to show you care. (Check out our cherry blossom card and strawberry shortbread cookie hearts recipe on the next page!)

Plan a surprise

One of the best ways to show a friend or family member you care about them is to plan a special outing just for the two of you. For example, you could invite your mom or dad on a hike or suggest a movie night with your best friend. You can also perform a random act of kindness, like cleaning the clutter out of the family car, surprising a grandparent with a phone call, or placing a surprise treat in a sibling's lunch box.

Fun holiday facts

Valentine's Day has been celebrated on February 14 since the 1400s, starting in Rome. The oldest known valentine was written in 1415 in France by Charles, the Duke of Orleans, in the form of a poem to his wife.

As early as the 1700s, Americans are believed to have started making and giving homemade valentine cards. The first store-bought cards were likely produced in the 1840s.

Around this same time, a British chocolate company, Cadbury, started selling sweets in special boxes for Valentine's Day. Cadbury encouraged customers to keep the boxes after Valentine's Day to store mementos, like love notes.

DID YOU KNOW?
The sakura, or cherry blossom, is the unofficial national flower of Japan.

Make tissue-paper cherry blossom greeting cards

What you'll need

- Twigs with no leaves
- Heavy paper or cardstock, folded in half
- White glue
- Masking tape, optional
- Tissue paper
- Pencil
- Round items (like coins or lids) to trace
- Scissors
- Dull pencil

Instructions

1. Glue a twig to a card. You can lightly tape the stem in place with masking tape as it dries.
2. Stack several layers of tissue paper. With the pencil, trace circles in various sizes onto the top layer. Cut out circles (so you're cutting a few layers of paper at a time).
3. Make a blossom: Take two circles of the same size and stack them together. Hold the edges and use the dull pencil to gently push the center of the circle down. Remove pencil. Twist pointy bottom so that layers are twisted together. Repeat to make more blossoms.
4. Gently remove the tape, if you used it, from your card. Glue the blossoms all over each branch, with smaller blossoms at the top and larger ones as the branch thickens.
5. Write a note to someone special inside the card, then give it to them.

Bake up strawberry shortbread cookie hearts

WARNING!
Ask an adult's permission before using the oven, mixer, or microwave.

Ingredients

- 1 (1-ounce) bag freeze-dried strawberries, crushed
- 2 cups flour
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch slices
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 (9-ounce) bag white chocolate chips
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil

Instructions

1. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper and heat the oven to 325° F. Set aside 2 tablespoons of the crushed strawberries, then whisk the remaining berries in a medium bowl with the flour and salt.
2. Place butter and sugar in bowl of a stand mixer fit with a paddle attachment. Mix at medium speed until light and fluffy. Blend in vanilla. Reduce mixer's speed to low and add flour a little at a time.
3. On a sheet of parchment, form dough into a ball and pat into a disk. Top dough with another sheet of parchment and roll out to ¼-inch thickness. Cut out cookies with a heart cookie cutter. Space hearts 2 inches apart on prepared baking sheets. Freeze 10 minutes.
4. Bake cookies until just set, about 15 minutes. Let cool on baking sheet for 5 minutes, then place on a rack to cool completely. Reserve the pans and parchment.
5. Put chocolate chips and oil in a heat-safe bowl. Melt according to package directions. Dip half of a cookie in chocolate, place on pan with parchment, then sprinkle immediately with strawberries. Repeat with remaining cookies. Let chocolate set. Makes about 18 cookies.

JODI LEVINE FOR SUPERMAKEIT; JOY HOWARD; ON LEFT PAGE: ALAMY; GETTY IMAGES (2)

Crisscross

Each of these words and phrases made using only the letters in the word HEART fits into this grid. Can you find where each one goes to complete the grid?

3 letters
AHA
ART
ERA
RAT

4 letters
AREA
HEAT
TART
TA-TA
TEAR
TREE

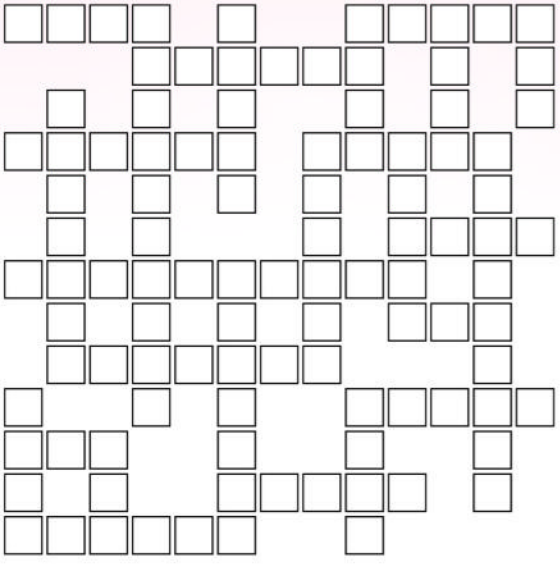
5 letters
EARTH
ETHER
TEETH
TERRA
TETRA
TREAT

6 letters
RATHER
TEETER
TETHER
THREAT

7 letters
HEATHER
RETREAT
THEATER

9 letters
HEART RATE

10 letters
AT THAT RATE
THERE, THERE



Take five

Five 5-letter things you might see on a valentine card are hidden in this grid. For each one, the first letter is somewhere in the first column, the second is somewhere in the second column, and so on. Can you find all five? (NEED A HINT? Check the bottom of the page.)

R	E	R	I	T
C	O	P	M	S
H	R	Y	R	D
R	U	A	E	W
A	H	S	O	E

ALL THE SAME

Each answer contains the letters H-O-N. Those letters have been placed for you. Can you figure out the words?

1. Equipment that a recording artist sings into — ☐☐☐☐☐☐HON☐
2. Capital of Hawaii — HON☐☐☐☐☐
3. A 26.2-mile race — ☐☐☐☐☐HON
4. Long piece of classical music, like Beethoven's Ninth — ☐☐☐☐HON☐
5. Native American woman who was the title character of a Disney movie — ☐☐☐☐HON☐☐☐

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

SUDOKU

To complete the grid, place the numbers from 1 to 6 exactly once in each row, column, and 2x3 bold-lined box.

2				4	
	5		1		2
		4			
			2		
5		2		3	
	4				6

Spot the difference

These two pictures of Icelandic puffins appear to be the same, but take a closer look. There are actually five differences. Can you see them?

PUZZLES BY PUZZABILITY

Take five hint: One of the words begins with RH.

This snowplow was named by eighth graders.

Naming contests plow ahead

A winter tradition has returned as US states and cities hold contests to name their snowplows. Newly named machines include "Snowana" in Massachusetts, "Taylor Drift" in Connecticut, and "Pow Pow Ka Plow" in Idaho. "Darth Blader" and "Buzz Iceclear" make roads safer in Toledo, Ohio, while "Plowy McPlowface" sweeps Arlington, Virginia, and New Mexico welcomes "Snow Way, José!" In Chicago, Illinois, winning names like "Bozo the Plown" and "Scoop, There It Is!" earn submitters a photo with the plow.

No spoon required.

A soothing soup in candy form

A soup brand is redefining the classic cold-weather comfort food. Progresso has introduced Soup Drops: hard candies that are said to contain the flavors of broth, vegetables, chicken, egg noodles, and a touch of parsley. The savory candies come in a can and are designed for people on the go—or those who would reach for a cough drop during cold and flu season. "When you're sick, nothing is truly more reassuring than chicken noodle soup," a company official said. "So we thought, why stop at the soup bowl?"

Souring on a sweet topping

Steep price for pineapple pizza

A restaurant in England is trying to stop people from eating Hawaiian pizza by pushing the menu item's price up to £100 (about $125). The Hawaiian, which is topped with ham and pineapple, has existed since at least the 1960s. Although some people love the flavors, others say the only fruit that belongs on a pizza is a tomato. Quin Jianoran, the head chef at Lupa Pizza, calls pineapple a "tropical menace" that should never be used as a topping. He hopes the hefty cost will prevent people from ordering it.

Real or fake?

Does it promote work-life buoyance?

The dip-to-desk swimsuit

Many people like to start the day with a morning swim, which can be a great way to stay healthy. But what about busy workers who are short on time? A European fitness club has offered a solution: a waterproof business suit that lets wearers go from taking a plunge in the pool to working at the office without changing clothes. A spokesperson for the company said, "You can be straight out of the pool and back at your desk in a matter of seconds." Is this story real, or are we just freestyling?*

*Real! The "swimsuit" from David Lloyd Clubs is made using special water-resistant fabric. Each suit takes more than three weeks to make. The fitness club is hoping to make the garments available to the public soon.

GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY PROGRESSO; SWNS; JOE PEPLER/PINPEP/SWNS; ON LEFT PAGE: GETTY IMAGES (2)

Editor's note

The first issue of *The Week Junior* shipped to the printer on March 17, 2020, with a cover date of March 27. This means that our fifth anniversary is rapidly approaching! Our team is very excited about it, and we want to share the excitement with you. We have some special content planned for our anniversary issue coming up in March. In the meantime, we would like to invite you to participate in the fun by sending us a photo of you holding up the issue you liked best since you began subscribing, whether that was one month or three years ago. Did your favorite cover feature a person, an animal, an event, or something else? We want to know! You can find the instructions for sending in your photo in the red box below. We will feature a selection of submissions in our anniversary issue. We hope you'll help us celebrate this milestone!

Andrea Barbalich
Editorial Director

A shout-out for jiujitsu

Elias, 10, and Ezra, 8, Texas

"We were thrilled to see martial arts featured in *The Week Junior*. We learn Brazilian jiujitsu and love how you are highlighting non-mainstream sports and raising awareness about their benefits. Jiujitsu not only helps in self-defense, staying fit, and making friends, but it also helps with focus, sequencing, and multitasking. We have been training for more than two years now and are national competitors. We are working harder than ever to meet our goals. The sport taught us to develop grit, overcome challenges with grace, and be a good sport."

Have you done something interesting or raised money for a cause you care about? Whatever you're up to, we want to hear about it at *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

JOKE OF THE WEEK

Why did the cell phone need to get glasses?

It lost all its contacts.

CHARITY OF THE WEEK

Back on My Feet

This organization helps those who are experiencing homelessness take care of their health. It encourages people living in shelters to step out for group walks or jogs a few times a week. It also offers training and resources on applying for jobs and finding housing. Since 2007, it has helped more than 15,000 people in 16 cities.

Find out more at backonmyfeet.org.

BACK ON MY FEET.

Show us your favorite issue of *The Week Junior*!

***The Week Junior* will be marking its fifth anniversary in March. To celebrate, we're asking readers to send us photos of themselves holding the issue they enjoyed most since they began subscribing. Some of the photos we receive will appear in Issue 257. If you'd like to participate, ask an adult to email your photo to *hello@theweekjunior.com* with Favorite Issue in the subject line. Thank you for helping us look back on an amazing five years of publication!**

THE WEEK Junior IT'S YOUR TURN Email your news, views, and photos to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

Your turn

YOUR PHOTOS

We'd love to see pictures you've taken or pictures with you in them! Have an adult email them to us at *hello@theweekjunior.com*, along with anything you would like us to know about what's happening in the photo.

"I read about the Los Angeles fires in *The Week Junior*. I have friends who lost their homes in the fire, and it is very sad." Allie, 8, California

"I was inspired by *The Week Junior* to make former President Jimmy Carter's favorite peanut butter pie." Timothy, 8, New York

"After reading about it in *The Week Junior*, I made a cozy corner with books, pillows, and more." Hazel, 10, New Hampshire

Teacher OF THE WEEK

Teacher's Name: **Ms. Baker**

School: **Asbury Elementary School**

"Ms. Baker is my literacy teacher. She is so hardworking and handles the work of about 50 students. I can tell she cares about us because she puts so much effort into teaching. She works with every student in both classes on our essays and paragraphs. She gives us tips on our homework, schoolwork, and life skills. She is the most caring literacy teacher I've ever had!"

Alma, 9, Colorado

Nominate your teacher for Teacher of the Week!
Send your reason for the nomination, a photo of your teacher, and your school's name and address to *hello@theweekjunior.com*.

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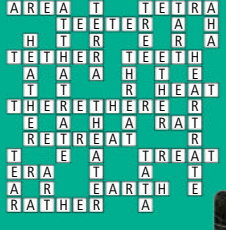
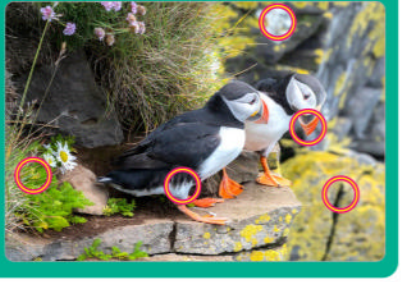
Puzzle answers (from page 26)



2	1	6	3	4	5
4	5	3	1	6	2
1	2	4	6	5	3
6	3	5	2	1	4
5	6	2	4	3	1
3	4	1	5	2	6

Take five
roses
cupid
heart
rhyme
arrow

All the same
1. microphone
2. Honolulu
3. marathon
4. symphony
5. Pocahontas



Quiz answers (from page 30) **1** Anthony Mackie **2** c) Denver **3** False. The Nintendo DS is the best-selling Nintendo console. **4** c) Poppy **5** El Dorado **6** False. Lucy ran slower than modern humans. **7** b) Kenan Thompson **8** c) Turkey **9** True **10** The Great Backyard Bird Count **11** a) Carter G. Woodson **12** a) 10 **13** b) Noah Lyles **14** True **15** Pineapple

We want to hear from you! To have your letters, photos, nominations, recommendations, or ideas considered for inclusion in the magazine, please include your first name, age, and state with your submission. By emailing your submission to us, you give *The Week Junior* consent to publish it in the magazine and online. Please get your parent/guardian's permission before sending anything to us.

How much of this week's news can you remember?

1 What is the name of the actor who plays the first Black Captain America?

2 What city will be the home of the 16th National Women's Soccer League franchise?

a) Cincinnati b) Cleveland c) Denver

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

3 True or false? The Nintendo Switch is the best-selling Nintendo console of all time.

True ☐ False ☐

4 A pygmy hippo at Richmond Metro Zoo in Virginia was given what name in an online contest?

a) Patty b) Penny c) Poppy

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

5 The new *Paddington* film features which legendary lost city?

6 True or false? A prehistoric human ancestor called Lucy ran faster than modern humans.

True ☐ False ☐

7 Who is the longest-serving cast member in *Saturday Night Live*'s history?

a) Amy Poehler

b) Kenan Thompson

c) Will Ferrell

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

8 In which country does the book *City Spies: London Calling* begin?

a) France

b) Japan

c) Turkey

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

9 True or false? The largest glacier in Europe is located in Iceland.

True ☐ False ☐

10 What is the name of the global birdwatching event taking place from February 14–17?

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 29.

11 Who established what would later become Black History Month?

a) Carter G. Woodson

b) Frederick Douglass

c) W.E.B. Du Bois

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

12 Scientists found that the human brain can process information at a speed of how many bits per second?

a) 10

b) 100

c) 1,000

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

13 Who won the men's 60-meter race at the New Balance Indoor Grand Prix?

a) Marcell Jacobs

b) Noah Lyles

c) Terrence Jones

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐

14 True or false? Beyoncé is the first Black artist to win the Grammy Award for Best Country Album.

True ☐ False ☐

15 Lupa Pizza in England is charging about $125 for a pie topped with ham and what other ingredient?

THE WEEK Junior

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THE WEEK Junior
READ ACROSS AMERICA
Take part in the nation's celebration of reading with our list of 50 books for 50 states p12
THE WORLD'S BEST NEWS & FACTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
Making sense of the world
THE BEST MAGAZINE FOR CURIOUS KIDS
EARTH DAY 2024
CELEBRATE EART
Join a billion people around showing support for the
BIG & BRAW
The Fat Bear Week c is about to beg
Give

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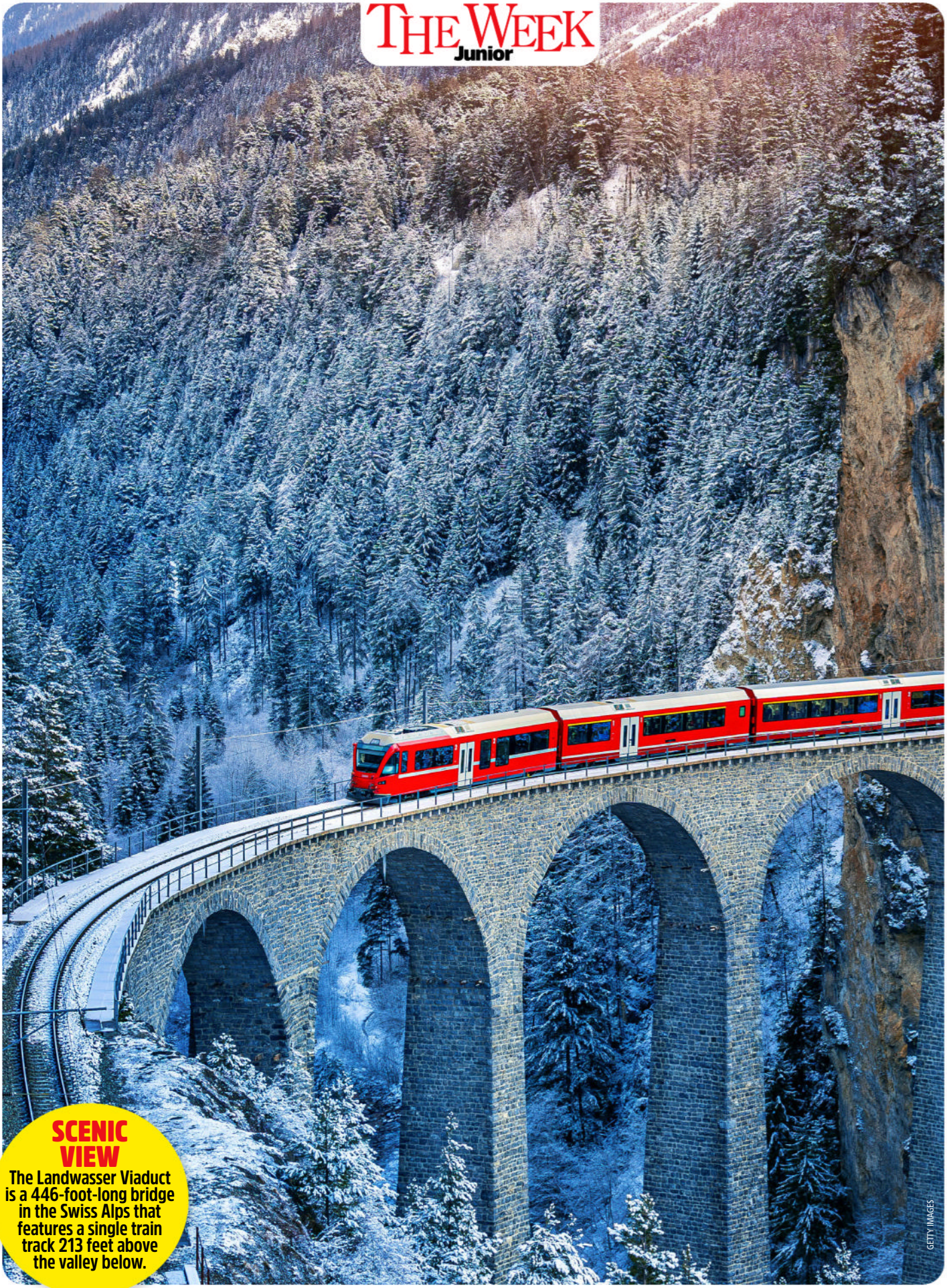
SCAN TO ORDER

THE WEEK Junior



SCENIC VIEW

The Landwasser Viaduct is a 446-foot-long bridge in the Swiss Alps that features a single train track 213 feet above the valley below.

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